

Understanding a heart patients' quality of life can improve outcomes

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Completing a quality-of-life questionnaire at a healthcare provider's office could help patients live longer and live better, according to a new scientific statement published in *Circulation*, a journal of the American Heart Association.

In the statement, the association urges healthcare providers to assess their patients' [cardiovascular health](#) by using standardized patient surveys. These surveys directly measure the impact of heart disease on patients, including their symptoms, quality of life, and ability to function physically and mentally.

Surveys focused on a patients' quality of life can also predict death, future [cardiac events](#), hospitalization and costs of care. The results should be considered as important as other outcomes, like survival, statement authors said.

"Ultimately, efforts to improve the healthcare system will only be successful if they translate into better [patient outcomes](#)—not just longevity, but also how well patients live," said John Rumsfeld, M.D., Ph.D., lead statement author. "This statement recommends increasing the standardized measurement of patient health status—so we can better understand, monitor and minimize the burden of disease on patients' lives."

Patient surveys have been used successfully in clinical trials and research studies; however, they aren't used enough in day-to-day care, said

Rumsfeld.

Direct patient input will also move heart disease care closer to the promise of patient-centered care, said Rumsfeld, national director of cardiology for the U.S. Veterans Health Administration and professor of medicine at the University of Colorado School of Medicine in Denver, Colo.

[Healthcare providers](#) should integrate asking their patients to complete health status surveys as part of routine care, to measure their cardiovascular health, Rumsfeld said.

"Changes in health status are prognostic of outcome, including death and heart events. Measuring patient [health status](#) may help identify patients having more difficulty with symptoms or daily functioning due to their cardiovascular disease."

Furthermore, questionnaires can help reveal depression, which can significantly worsen cardiovascular health, but is often underdiagnosed despite being common among cardiovascular patients.

"Identification and treatment of depression in cardiovascular patients can improve their quality of life," Rumsfeld said.

Provided by American Heart Association

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